



THALASSIDROMA MELANOGASTER, *Gould.*

Black-bellied Storm Petrel.

Thalassidroma melanogaster, Gould in Ann. and Mag. of Nat. Hist., vol. xiii. p. 367.

My acquaintance with this species commenced about the 12th of August 1839, when off Cape Lagullas on my voyage to Australia, and from that date it was almost daily observed during our transit across the South Indian Ocean until we arrived at Van Diemen's Land on the 19th of September; its numbers gradually increasing from the neighbourhood of the islands of St. Paul's and Amsterdam to the termination of the voyage. I again encountered it in March 1840, on my passage home, and that in great abundance, between the eastern coast of Australia and New Zealand. Specimens were also procured off the Lagullas Bank by His Excellency Governor Grey on his outward voyage to Australia, and are now deposited in the British Museum.

It is a very fine species, and when viewed from the ship is at once distinguished from all the other Petrels by the broad black mark which passes down the centre of the abdomen, and offers a strong contrast to the snowy whiteness of the flanks.

It is a bird of powerful flight, and pats the surface of the rising waves more frequently than any other species that came under my notice, or perhaps the great length of its legs rendered this action more conspicuous; its habits and general economy are of course very similar to those of the other members of the genus.

All the plumage deep sooty black with the exception of the upper tail-coverts and flanks, which are snow-white; bill, legs and feet black.

The figures in the accompanying Plate represent the birds of the natural size, breasting one of those tempestuous seas which so frequently occur in high southern latitudes.